

# COMPREHENDING COVID

*A TRI-BETA PANDEMIC NEWSLETTER*



## The Impact of the Pandemic on College Students

The COVID-19 pandemic was a surprise at first, resulting in a learning curve that many were unsure of how to handle. Despite this, people have been resilient in achieving their goals, finding ways to adapt to this pandemic, whether it be frontline workers, business owners, professors, students, etc. Specifically, with the unexpected challenges, students have been struggling to maintain both their social and academic lives. However, many have found opportunities to discover new interests and career paths, finding hope in this pandemic.

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To begin, this virtual learning experience is just not the same as in-person education. There are so many experiences in-person that are hard to learn and understand to the same extent through a computer. For instance, in the School of Science, science courses are accompanied with a 3 hour lab, which consists of hands-on learning of lab techniques, collecting of data for analysis, and collaborating of groups; this is hard to replicate through a computer. Luckily, professors have found various programs to help supplement the experiences you would gain from an in person lab.



One of these programs is Labster, which allows for virtual labs to be carried out similar to a virtual reality simulation. In these online labs, students are not only quizzed on relevant information, but also able to carry out the various steps of an experiment in order to learn real-life-applicable laboratory procedures. In-person and online labs are not only necessary to reinforce what is taught in class and put this information into perspective in terms of the real world, but they are also needed to develop lab skills that are useful in many professional careers, especially research.

Although these online labs may not fully replicate what can be learned in-person, simulated labs may open the door to learning and understanding different lab techniques that may not have been carried out in person, due to limited time and resources. Therefore, we can see that both in-person and remote education can have its pros and cons.



Outside of the classroom, the pandemic has impacted experiences that students previously were able to have to build up their resume. Study abroad has since been halted, and if resumed will have major limitations. Internships and shadowing opportunities are difficult to find, and many have been cancelled during the pandemic. Arts & performances are struggling because interactions are limited and performances are not allowed. No matter the major of a college student, these additional experiences that students apply for to stand out from the crowd, and build up their skill set and resume have become even more difficult to find.



However, some programs and companies have certainly adjusted to the pandemic and realized how they needed to cater towards students' needs by creating virtual opportunities. For instance, many internships and shadowing opportunities have switched to a virtual platform. An international internship organization like [Meiji internships](#), which has locations globally, has created virtual internships for students to participate in without the risk of traveling. Pre-health students have also been able to sit in on telehealth appointments or participate as a virtual scribe.



Although it may seem that college students have lacked access to valuable experiences during the pandemic, it has become reassuring to know that many organizations have slowly transformed typically in-person opportunities to virtual platforms. Students may just have to do some additional research to find new ways to gain valuable career-building opportunities, but with this added effort could come a unique experience that may impress future employers. It is essential that no one lose hope during this time!

**Some additional programs are:**

- [Pathways to Science](#)
- [National Summer Undergraduate Research Project](#): This is a national program matching college students (particularly BIPOC and first generation college students) with mentors for virtual summer research experiences in microbiology.

# Difficulties of Finding and Balancing Employment In a COVID World

The unemployment rate, which has been at an all time low during the past 50 years prior to the pandemic, increased 4.4% in March due to COVID-19. When the pandemic hit, graduating college seniors were trying to find positions in the workforce when over 38 million unemployment claims have been filed. Companies were even revoking pre-pandemic job offers to college graduates.



Applying for a job is now much harder, since not only is there such high competition, but there is now a virtual component for the hiring process, and for the job itself as well. However, here are some tips and tricks to assist you in applying for and receiving job offers during the pandemic.

# Tips for the Application Process

In a COVID world, getting your dream job might not be an option. You need to keep an open mind and be flexible.

1. Look for other jobs that are similar to the ones you are interested in. Also, keep in mind that any job allows you the opportunity to develop your skill sets, making you a more viable candidate for future applications.



2. Networking can be very difficult with many things being online, but it is still possible. For example, you can attend virtual events. LinkedIn and Facebook also have professional groups that you can join.



3. Reach out to old professors and colleagues and check in to see if there's anything you can do to help them. Rebuild the rapport that was lost during the pandemic and continue to strengthen your relationships.



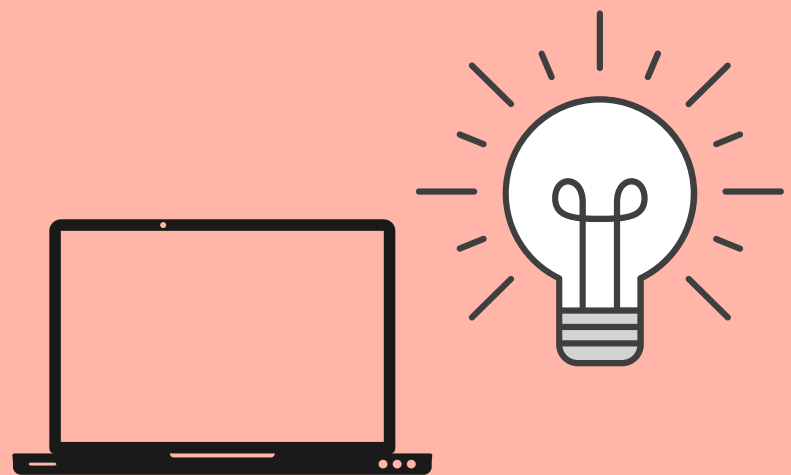
# Tips for Interviews

Many interviews are done online, so you lose the face-to-face interactions and immediate first impressions. You can still create an emotional effort with your interviewer over a conference call, although it will be more difficult. Make sure you maintain “eye contact” over the video call and smile and nod throughout the interview.



You can still ask questions to get to know your interviewer, but during your conversations try to insert stories that amplify your character and soft skills, such as empathy or adaptability. This may be a good time to ask employers about their pandemic response to get insight about their flexibility towards working remotely, the value they place in their employees, and how their accommodations to maintain a work-life balance.

Another critical factor that many overlook is the position of the camera. Make sure that the space you are having the interview in does not have distracting “clutter” in the background or bad lighting that will obscure parts of your face.



Resumes are a key component of the job application process. More often than not, there are programs that will filter through electronic resumes and target keywords relevant to the job. In order to help ensure your resume is passed onto a human to read, tailor each resume for a particular job, so that the computer picks up on the critical keywords it is searching for.

**KEYWORDS TO USE:**

1. Communication skills
2. Detail Oriented
3. Problem Solving
4. Leadership
5. Result Driven



It is also hard to have mentoring opportunities and learn from those who would normally work alongside you. With telecommuting comes flexibility. Employees will have an easier time to speak to more clients and employees since their workday is more flexible, but these wide discrepancies in each employee's schedule may make it difficult for meetings within the office to occur at a reasonable hour. Making time to meet with supervisors can ensure that you are on track to being successful at your new job.



If you do not receive an offer, it is okay. Many graduates are taking gap years in 2020 for the same reason. Take it as an opportunity to further your knowledge and experience. Although this is a tough time for everyone, if you have the right mindset and strategies in place, you will be able to succeed.

For more information on helpful tips for finding a job during COVID-19, visit:

[The Enterprisers Project.](#)



## **The Importance of Monitoring Your Physical and Mental Health During the Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges to individuals across the globe. Among the many issues, the often “swept under the rug” topic of mental health has become an issue of rising focus. In particular, higher education and students in college have been faced with unprecedented circumstances adapting to virtual learning environments. These changes can have an adverse effect on the mental and physical health of students, especially during quarantine and when physical distancing guidelines are in effect.



When describing school or a learning environment, there are many words that can be used to address how students feel towards them. Among the many positive descriptions, these learning institutions can carry stress, anxiety, and thoughts of uncertainty. Coupled with the transition to online learning, these emotions of stress and anxiety may be heightened.



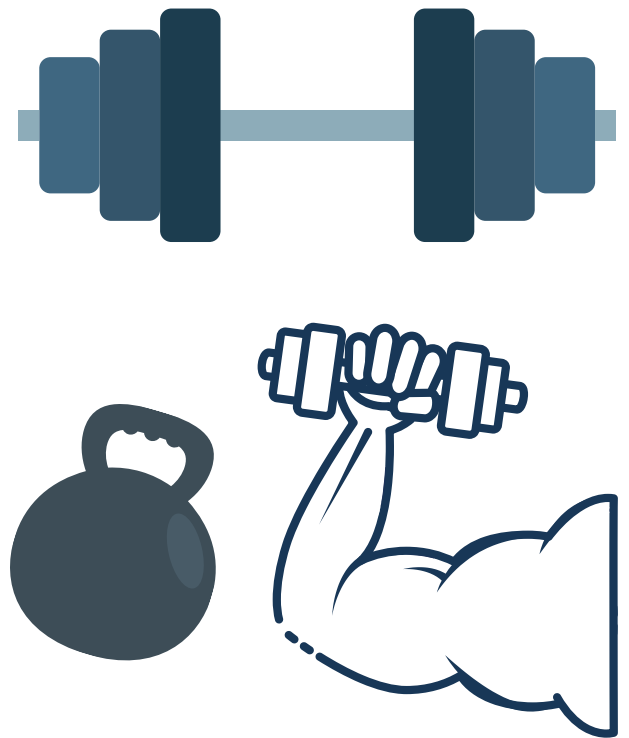
These feelings could be attributed to lack of concentration/motivation, decreased face-to-face interactions with friends and teachers, or a state of worry that their own health or that of a loved one may be affected. Perhaps a lot of the anxiety can be attributed to just how uncertain the future looks economically, socially, and educationally.



When will we be able to return to “normal”? While some college students may be feeling overwhelmed, many have said that being at home has provided them with new opportunities. An opportunity to grow closer with family. An opportunity to explore hidden passions. An opportunity to introspect on how far we have come and where we can go from here. Sometimes cultivating a positive mindset in a world of negativity can make all the difference in the way we approach day-to-day challenges.



Additionally, physical health is as equally important as mental health when it comes to quarantine. With many of the gyms reopening, many individuals have been eager to get back to their regular routines. As college students, physical health can be easily forgotten when there are so many other things to worry about.



However, during quarantine, many of us have taken an initiative to find ways to exercise, which is awesome! For example, many may go on runs or bike rides around their neighborhoods, or even take part in home workouts. Exercising the body and brain can play a role in optimizing an individual's performance and wellness.



Although the future remains uncertain and we have no control over what the future holds, we do have control over what we do each day of our lives. It is easy to look at the many things that the pandemic has forced us to miss during this time, but that just keeps us from moving forward. Let's use this time and create opportunities for not only our own development, but also those around us. Sometimes all it takes is simply reaching out or making a phone call. Together, we can beat the health stigmas and collectively contribute to keeping the world safer, both physically and mentally.

**For our students, here are some resources!**

1. [Mental Health Services](#)
2. [TCNJ Connect App](#)
3. [TCNJ Mindfulness Resources](#)

